



# Houston District Success Stories



Edelmiro Muniz

Edelmiro Muniz started a small engineering company in 1992, and today Muniz Engineering, Inc. (MEI) has 375 capable and committed employees who deliver high quality services to numerous customers. In 1995, MEI entered the Small Business Administration's 8(a) program for socially and economically disadvantaged business. The 8(a) has provided assistance to MEI in attaining federal contracts. They currently have 35 contracts of which 31% are set-asides through the 8(a) program.

MEI is pursuing competitive procurements and they are working on a joint venture to become the prime contractor on JSC's Program Integration and Control, a small business set aside. If they succeed, they expect to increase annual revenues to \$12 million. Their customer base includes NASA, DOD, GSA and numerous commercial companies and they are pursuing contracts with Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and SAIC.

MEI was recognized as a "Houston 100" company in 1996, 2000, 2001 and 2002 for growth and positive impact in the community. They were selected as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's 2001 Minority Subcontractor of the Year, received the SBA Administrator's Award for Excellence in 2002, and they are listed in the "Hispanic Business Fifty" 2004 Minority Business Subcontractors of the Year.

Edelmiro gives back to the community, both to improve its quality and to inspire young people to remain in school and further their education. The product of a modest home himself, he understands the plight of the disadvantaged. His own success has inspired the wish to give back to the community in which he does so generously through mentoring, community service, and providing job opportunities. Mr. Muniz is committed to helping emerging businesses succeed through the SBA's Mentor Protégé Program as exemplified by the 8 (a) company, GeoControls, Inc. MEI is informally mentoring two HUB Zone certified companies, with assistance in marketing, employee benefit packages, and offering meaningful subcontract work with NASA. Mr. Muniz volunteers 1,000 hours in annual technical consultation to small business through the Space Alliance Technology Outreach

Program and has served as advisor/board member for the Friends of Bridgeport Communities in Schools, the Clear Lake Area Chamber of Commerce, Southwestern Aerospace Professional Representatives Association, University of Houston Clear Lake Community Development Advisory Council, EA Smith YMCA, and Innovative Alternatives.

For more information about Muniz Engineering, Inc visit their website at <http://www.munizengineering.com/>

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"Loving What we do" has become the motivation and success of Houston's Top Catering Service HOUSTON-- Casas Catering has set the benchmark for superb food catering in the Houston Metroplex area for the last 16 years by understanding their customers' needs, and aiming to set themselves apart from the rest. Their ability to stay attune to the changing trends has allowed this business to remain a top of the cutting edge in the catering industry.

Casas Catering was brought into existence in 1987 by Theresa Casa's brother in law, Albert Casas, who saw and understood the need for corporate catering in Houston at that time. Though business was not great, Albert asked Theresa to join him in 1989 to assist him as his office manager because he believed in her consistent ability not to fail. In the years to come, Albert became ill and passed away in 1991 leaving the business to his parents. Theresa's in-laws had no interest in starting over after retirement, so they asked Theresa and her husband to assume full responsibility of the business. With no experience in catering, Theresa managed to come up with creative ways to introduce her products and services to the local area. One day, she walked over the nearest office building with a tray full of a variety of tasty products and offered free samples to receptionists and secretaries. Theresa understood these individuals held the key to opening doors for her catering service, and eventually her ingenuity paid off. One could say she introduced the corporate world to "promotional lunches".

It wasn't long before President's and CEO's of many Fortune 500 Companies were interested in having Casas Catering prepare their glamorous affairs. The businesses' high-end reputation for

excellent service combined with outstanding, savory food spread fast throughout the downtown area, and Casas Catering doubled sales by 1994. With this at hand, Theresa was faced with having to expand her demanding business. Later in 1994, she found the right property and had no difficulty acquiring it; however, this property needed serious renovation. None of her old equipment was geared for commercial cooking, and this new establishment didn't come with proper equipment. She then turned to lending institutions to seek financial help. Despite the rapid growth of her business, the banks didn't feel confident in lending money to a Hispanic, women-owned-business. As a matter of fact, various peers encourage Theresa to change her business name, because they advise her to disassociate from the stereotype of owning a "Tex-Mex" catering business. But she stood her ground. Proud of her Hispanic origin, she fought against this form of thinking, and ultimately she had faith in her business. After the banks denied her the loan, she later found out about SBA and used their services to get her problem solved. Once assisted by the SBA, Theresa received a loan for \$150,000 from Frost Bank and her new catering business facility was born.

Mrs. Casas is also very active in her community and has a strong belief in providing encouragement to others through personal example and leadership. She is highly involved and is supportive of De Madres a Madres, The Girl Scouts of Houston, The March of Dimes, Mentoring program at Lee High School and the United Way. In addition, she also sits in the following Boards: Hispanic Women in Leadership, Houston Minority Business Council, Women Business Enterprise Alliance, Houston Asian Chamber of Commerce, MACE, and Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Back in 2001 she received "The Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Female Entrepreneur of the Year Award" from the HCOC. As if this was not enough, Casas Catering also maintains a high level of involvement with various organizations pertaining to the catering industry. This catering business holds positions on the Board of Directors of NACE (National Association of Catering Executives) and ISES (International Special Events Society). Also, after Houston's economy was greatly impacted by the events of September 11, the fall of Enron and the unexpected war of Iraq, Casas Catering found ways to stay afloat. One of them was to create a special event to bring 30 prestigious companies, including special event industry leaders, to participate in a one-night showcasing event. Though many said this could not be done, on April 24, 2003, Casas Catering hosted "Splendida", the largest and most successful showcasing event ever produced in Houston.

Mrs. Casas is truly an example of achieving the American Dream. Although many mountains stood against her, she only proved to rise above it all. She constantly reminds herself that competition is difficult in a large city such as Houston, however, to stay competitive in this market she offers her own valued recipe: Inspire loyal employees, acquire client's satisfaction, keep abreast of corporate issues, offer creative venue selections, and give back to the community with a twist of "loving what you do"... equals success.

For more information about Casas Catering visit their website at <http://www.casascatering.com/splash.htm>



CEO  
Michele LaNoue

Headworks Inc received SBA guaranteed loans and counseling assistance. Headworks Inc. is Houston-based and the nation's leading supplier of municipal water and wastewater screening systems with installations in more than 20 countries.

Headworks Inc provides innovative solutions and screening equipment to the water and wastewater treatment industries. Headworks Inc has installations in Austria, Germany, England, Hong Kong, the United States, Peru, Singapore, Chile, Holland, and South Africa, and is an active community and industry leader.

Dependable engineering, quality workmanship and superior technology represent a significant advance in screening technology worldwide. Continued quality customer service and commitment to research and development guarantee that Headworks remains at the forefront of excellence.

For more information about Headworks Inc. visit their website at <http://www.headworksusa.com>